Buttercups (Yellow) in Edinburgh / Lothians

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These are the yellow buttercups found in the region, with a mention of the remainder (all rarities) from the UK.

- Look particularly at both lower and upper leaves, and whether the sepals under the flower base point up (common) or down (less common). Fruits may provide useful clues for rare casuals.

At a glance

Sepals Downturned : Bulbous, Hairy, Celery-Leaved at fruiting (+ rare: Rough-Fruited, Small-Flowered)

Species Covered

Creeping Buttercup - Ranunculus repens - Ubiquitous (esp damp spots)

Meadow Buttercup - Ranunculus acris - Fairly ubiquitous (grassland including open woods)

Goldilocks Buttercup / Wood Goldilocks - Ranunculus auricomus - Patchy in woods (in or near woods and hedges)

Bulbous Buttercup - Ranunculus bulbosus - Patchy esp coastal and Arthur's Seat to Juniper Green (grassland)

Hairy Buttercup - Ranunculus sardous - Rare (old records) (damp grassy/arable spots)

Celery-leaved Buttercup - Ranunculus sceleratus - Patchy (in wet or seasonally wet areas)

Lesser Celandine - Ficaria verna (and subspecies) - Widespread (varied habitat)

Lesser Spearwort - Ranunculus flammula - Widespread outside city (wet or seasonally wet spots)

Greater Spearwort - Ranunculus lingua - Patchy, often in maintained ponds

Winter Aconite - Eranthis hyemalis - Scattered around (from garden escapees or relics)

Globe-Flower - Trollius europaeus - Occasional (damp areas in hills and as escapees)

Marsh Marigold - Caltha palustris - Widespread (in water) but uncommon Dalkeith to Dunbar

Corn Buttercup - Ranunculus arvensis - Cultivated ground (rare)

Old & Nearby Rarities

St Martin's Buttercup - Ranunculus marginatus - Old record

Rough-fruited Buttercup - Ranunculus muricatus - Old record

Small-flowered Buttercup - Ranunculus parviflorus - Kirkaldy record

UK Rarities

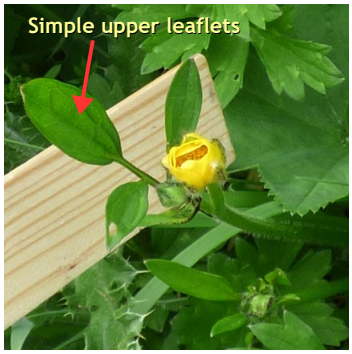
Creeping Spearwort - Ranunculus reptans - UK rarity

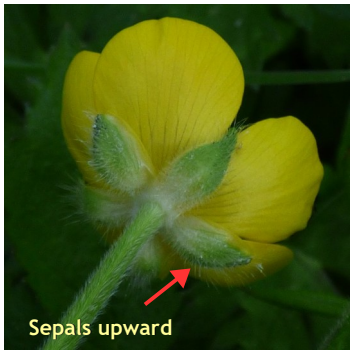
Hybrid Spearwort - Ranunculus x levenensis - UK rarity

Adderstongue Spearwort - Ranunculus ophioglossifolius - UK rarity

Creeping Buttercup - Ubiquitous (esp damp spots) - Ranunculus repens

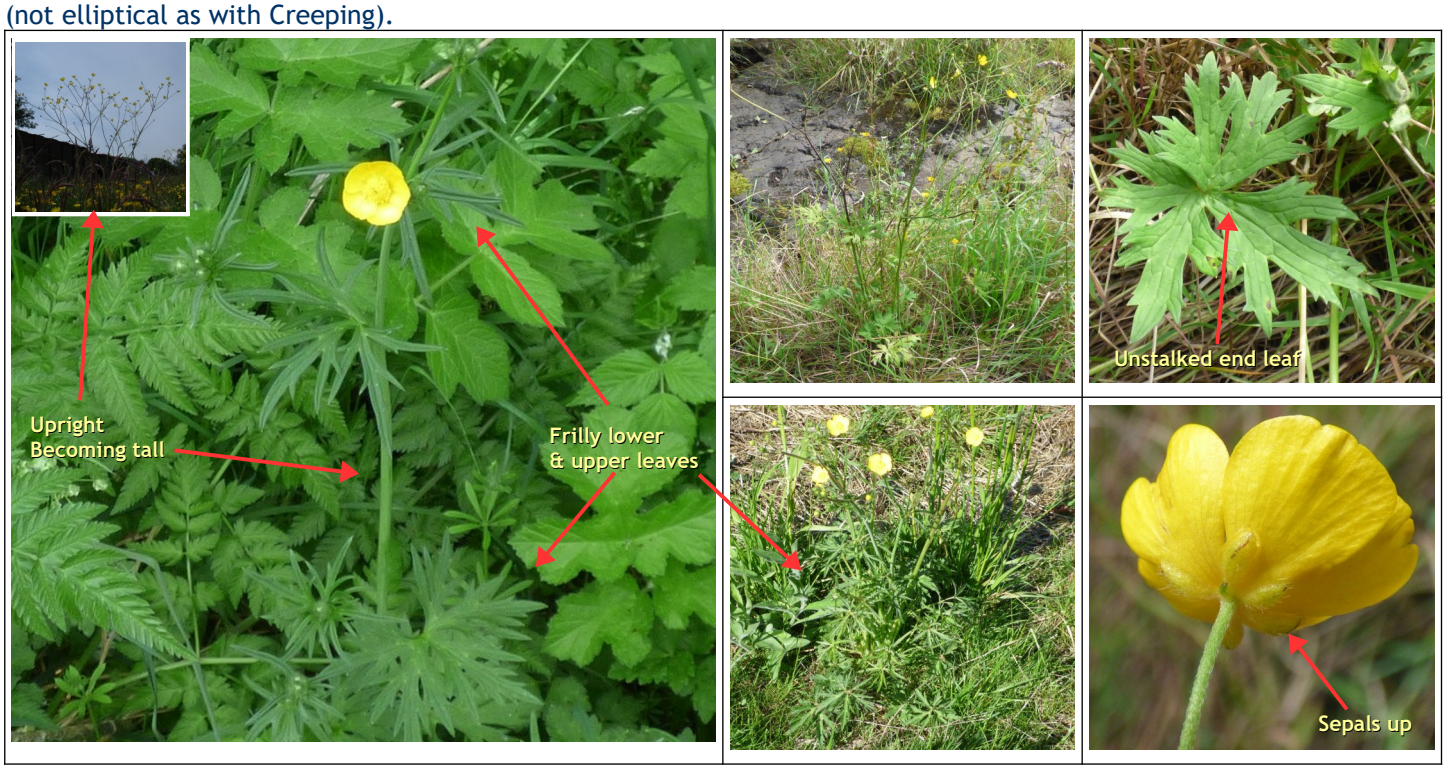
From a distance you will usually notice the white-blotched well-bodied leaves, but bear in mind the blotches may be faint or nearly the same colour as the leaf. The stalked end-leaflets can be a useful extra check, although sometimes the stalk may be short so look about.





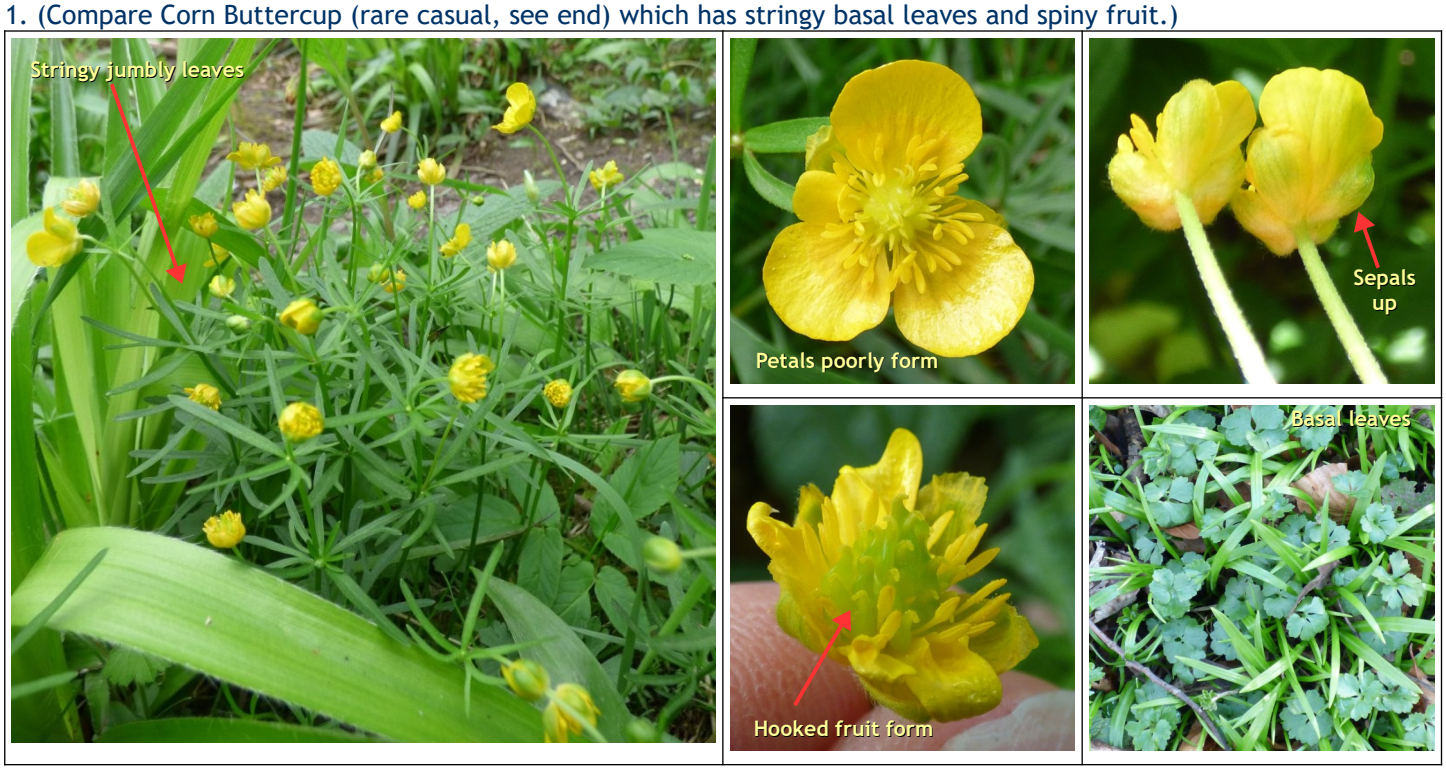
Meadow Buttercup - Fairly ubiquitous (grassland including open woods) - Ranunculus acris

From a distance this will tend to appear to have frilly leaves and often be tall. Note the upper leaves are also frilly (not elliptical as with Creeping).



Goldilocks Buttercup / Wood Goldilocks - Patchy in woods (in or near woods and hedges) - Ranunculus auricomus

From a distance you'll notice the disorderly jumble of stringy leaves. The flowers are malformed as the plant is not dependent on the flowers for reproduction. This flower has many microspecies, which are detailed in Sell & Murrell vol 1. (Compare Corn Buttercup (rare casual, see end) which has stringy basal leaves and spiny fruit.)

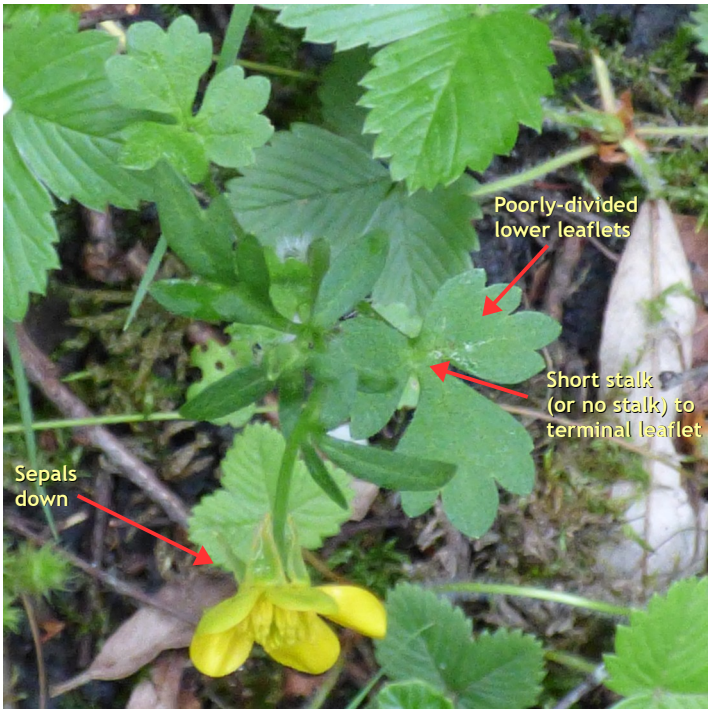


Bulbous Buttercup - Patchy esp coastal and Arthur's Seat to Juniper Green (grassland) - Ranunculus bulbosus

From a distance looks like an ordinary buttercup: the down-turned sepals that will make you know it's unusual. It's also notably long-hairy. (Compare Hairy Buttercup with its undivided lower leaves and shorter stalking of end-leaf.)

Hairy Buttercup - Rare (old records) (damp grassy/arable spots) - Ranunculus sardous

From a distance it may not look striking, but the leaves will seem unusual, and the down-turned sepals certainly point it out as interesting. (Compare Bulbous Buttercup with its very divided lower leaves and long stalking of end leaflet.)

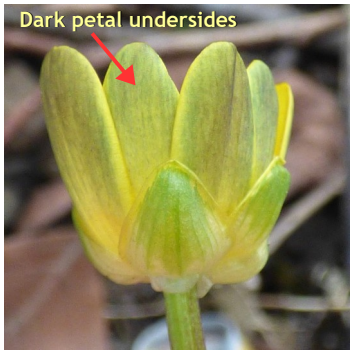


Celery-leaved Buttercup - Patchy (in wet or seasonally wet areas) - Ranunculus sceleratus

From a distance the plant is distinctive when in or near flower, however recognising its early growth comes with familiarity. Note the sap from this species can cause a reaction. (Compare Rough-fruited Buttercup (rare casual, see end) with sepals down at flowering.)

Lesser Celandine - Widespread (varied habitat) - Ficaria verna

- ssp verna is a (woodland) form with small flowers (petals mostly 6-11mm), poorly-formed fruit (0-6 seed developed), empty pollen grains and bulbils at its leaf bases from which it propagates
- ssp fertilis has large flowers (petals 10-20mm), and lacks the bulbils
- There are two other rare ssp in the UK, ficariiformis (bulbils, but well-formed fruit & pollen, flowers large (petals mostly 17-26mm)) & chrysocephala (no bulbils, and flowers large (petals 18-25mm), & seed large)



Lesser Spearwort - Widespread outside city (wet or seasonally wet spots) - Ranunculus flammula

A distinctive buttercup, but without the flowers the broad-ended leaves (eg pic 4) could sometimes look like a Claytonia. (Compare the three rare buttercups are listed at the end distinguished by being erect or rooting all along the stems.)

Greater Spearwort - Patchy, often in maintained ponds - Ranunculus lingua

A distinctive buttercup; without the flowers it will not be noticed for what it is until familiar with it.

Winter Aconite - Scattered around (from garden escapees or relics) - Eranthis hyemalis

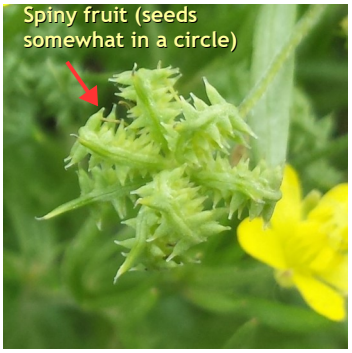
Flowers Jan-Mar.

Globe-Flower - Occasional (damp areas in hills and as escapees) - Trollius europaeus

Marsh Marigold - Widespread (in water) but uncommon Dalkeith to Dunbar - Caltha palustris

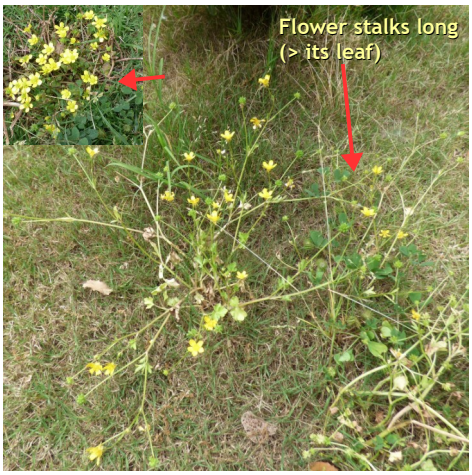
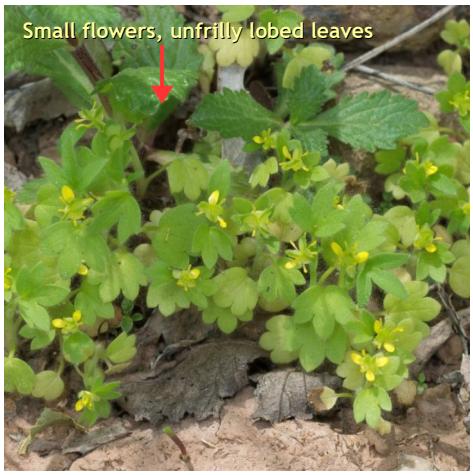
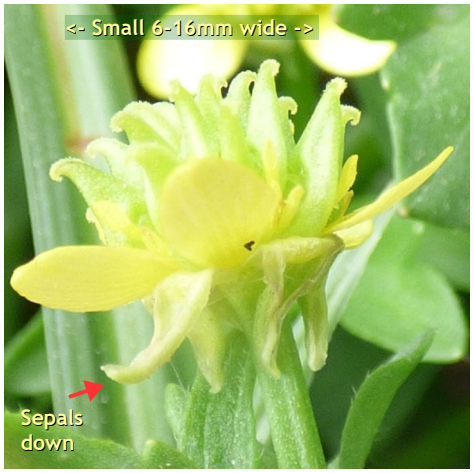
Corn Buttercup - Cultivated ground (rare) - Ranunculus arvensis

Basal leaves are also stringy. (Compare Goldilocks Buttercup which also has stringy but more disorderly leaves and rounded basal leaves.)



Pic 1 wildseed.co.uk • Pics 2-3 : Stefan.lefnaer

Old & Nearby Rarities

St Martin's Buttercup	Rough-fruited Buttercup	Small-flowered Buttercup
Ranunculus marginatus var trachycarpus with warts var marginatus without warts	Ranunculus muricatus	Ranunculus parviflorus
Cultivated ground	Cultivated ground	Open ground esp near coast
One old record	One old records	Spotted in Kirkaldy
	(Compare Celery-Leaved Buttercup with its sepals up at flowering.)	
		
		
		Pic 1 : preservons-la-nature.fr Pic 2 :

Also in the UK

Creeping Spearwort - Ranunculus reptans - Some records particularly around Loch Leven (Fife) and Lake District. Like Lesser Spearwort but rooting at all the nodes, petals <4mm, basal leaves >1.5mm wide.
Hybrid Spearwort - Ranunculus x levenensis - Loch Leven, Peebleshire hills & scattered patches. Like Creeping Spearwort but basal leaves <1.5mm wide.
Adderstongue Spearwort - Ranunculus ophioglossifolius - Rare occasional in UK. Like Lesser Spearwort, likes the wet, but erect and fruits with warts. All leaves cuneate at base.

Info

Updated : 2020-01-28 – please check you have the latest version!

Contact : David Merrick – facebook.com/meteorquake

Facebook Botany Group for Lothians : facebook.com/groups/lothiansbotany

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